

# 2006 Legislative Review

## How can we help?

Since this is an election year, this is the final update on legislative issues we are allowed to send to you in 2006. Nevertheless, we never stop serving as your representatives. If you have questions or need assistance in your dealings with state government, do not hesitate to contact us. We are glad to help.

### Rep. Richard DeBolt

Legislative Building 335C  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7896  
debolt.richard@leg.wa.gov  
Web site: <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/debolt.htm>

### Rep. Gary Alexander

John L. O'Brien Building 407  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7990  
alexander.gary@leg.wa.gov  
Web site: <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/alexander.htm>

**Toll-Free  
Legislative Hotline:  
1-800-562-6000**



*Rep. DeBolt serves as House Republican Leader, the number one leadership position among Republicans in the House of Representatives.*

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**Rep. Richard DeBolt**  
P.O. Box 40600  
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**Rep. Gary Alexander**



**Rep. Richard DeBolt**

**Spring 2006**

Dear friends and neighbors,

The 2006 legislative session was an intense 59-day session characterized by a mix of small achievements and big disappointments. While the Legislature and the governor's office are controlled by one party, minority Republicans were successful in shedding light and making progress on several important issues by laying out a clear, proactive, citizen-driven agenda at the onset of the 2006 session.

The Republican **Commitment to Washington** was an 11-point agenda crafted from our discussions with citizens during our statewide listening tour last fall. We developed common-sense goals generated from the ideas and concerns of people like you.

In the end, the results of the session were mixed. But on issues where citizens participated in the debate – such as the push for tougher penalties for sex predators and eliminating park fees – we had the most success in reaching positive solutions.

This newsletter is a summary of our work on key issues – where we believe lawmakers succeeded and failed the citizens of our communities and our state.

Our thanks to those of you who took time this year to communicate with us. As always, we welcome your comments, ideas and questions. Thank you for the honor of serving as your state representatives.

Sincerely,

  
**Gary Alexander**  
State Representative

  
**Richard DeBolt**  
State Representative

# Republicans navigate 2006 session with aggressive agenda

Republicans sought to drive a positive legislative agenda by proposing constructive ideas in our **Commitment to Washington**. There are many issues on which we fundamentally disagree with majority Democrats. We fought against their record spending increase and their push for government-run health care. On issues where we did find common ground, we challenged them to adopt meaningful solutions.

Despite being in the minority, House and Senate Republicans delivered significant progress on our Commitment to Washington. In many cases, we turned bad bills into good ones and pushed to make good bills better. Here are a few examples.

## AREAS WHERE WE SUCCEEDED

- ✓ **Home heating assistance:** In September, with energy costs on the rise, Republicans began pushing for additional home heating assistance for elderly and low-income citizens. The Democrats heard us: The home heating assistance bill was the first one passed in 2006.
- ✓ **State park day-use fee:** No sooner had Republicans added "eliminate the day-use fee at state parks" to our Commitment to Washington, than Democrats adopted the idea as their own, and the bill passed this year.
- ✓ **Sex offenders:** Republicans pushed hard this year for Jessica's Law to impose tougher penalties on sex offenders. We didn't quite get what we'd hoped for, but with the help of victim advocates, we did increase penalties for many sex offenders who rape children and vulnerable adults, with a mandatory 25-year sentence and tougher post-release registration requirements and supervision.
- ✓ **Breakthroughs on water:** After decades of stalemate on discussions over water, we gathered a core group of water and environmental stakeholders and worked out an historic agreement to develop new storage and conservation policies that will enhance access to water in the Columbia River Basin.



Rep. Alexander is the lead Republican on the House Appropriations Committee and led the unsuccessful effort by his caucus to enact Truth in Budgeting.

- ✓ **More help for farmers:** In January, Republicans committed to "strengthening the family farm." We delivered by creating policies to help better manage water where it's needed, and provided tax relief on farm machinery and fuel.
- ✓ **Unemployment insurance solution:** Republicans brought Democrat lawmakers and stakeholders to the table to craft a solution that will reduce UI taxes for most employers and ensure stable benefits for workers who lose their jobs.
- ✓ **Early learning:** Republicans authored major amendments to a bill creating the Department of Early Learning to help make it an agency that will serve the best interests of children and parents – not just another bureaucracy.
- ✓ **Drunk driving penalties:** For years, Republicans have tried to make repeat drunk driving a felony. This year, working with victims' groups and using media pressure, we passed a bill that will make a fifth DUI in 10 years a felony.
- ✓ **Help with the WASL:** The days of graduating students who can't read must end. As part of our commitment, Republicans pushed hard to help more students achieve high standards by providing assistance for those who don't pass the WASL on their first try.
- ✓ **Fighting against meth:** Republicans committed to making our neighborhoods safer by increasing penalties for meth production. This year we passed a bill that requires tougher sentencing; enhances support for local law enforcement to shut down meth labs; and provides funding for treatment for persons addicted to meth.

## DISAPPOINTMENTS

- Ø **Democrats approved the largest spending increase in state history:** blowing past the voter-approved spending limit and raising expenditures by 17.7 percent over the previous biennium.
- Ø **Consumers shut out of health care decisions:** Republicans support more affordable health care choices, with mandate-free coverage, health savings

accounts and a competitive market that attracts more doctors. The Democrats' approach is to impose higher taxes to pay for government-run health care and send patients to Canada for their prescription drugs. Our only success this year was a bill allowing state employees to use health savings accounts.

- Ø **Getting government out of the way of job growth:** Except for the agreement on unemployment insurance, there were no meaningful reforms to create a better business climate and attract more jobs to Washington. We were unable to repeal the onerous "death tax" approved by Democrats in 2005, which imposes an unfair penalty on family-owned businesses when they are passed down from one generation to the next.
- Ø **Missed the mark in our AIM for safer neighborhoods:** As part of our plan to end the scourge of meth, Republicans proposed tougher penalties and enforcement for the crimes of **A**uto theft and **I**D theft, two secondary crimes often committed by **M**eth users to support their drug trade.
- Ø **Failure to let citizens decide the definition of marriage:** The legal definition of marriage remains in the hands of the courts with the defeat of a measure to uphold the state's Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).
- Ø **No stopping government's trampling of property rights:** Landowners, large and small, need protection from the government's abuse of its powers of eminent domain and land grabs without compensation through heavy-handed land-use ordinances. Several property protection measures introduced by Republicans this year failed to receive consideration.

While we are disappointed in the lack of progress on these latter items, we view this as unfinished business for the 2007 session. We will continue to work on a constructive, solution-oriented agenda for the people of Washington. You may read the full Commitment to Washington at <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/priorities.htm>.

## Budget update

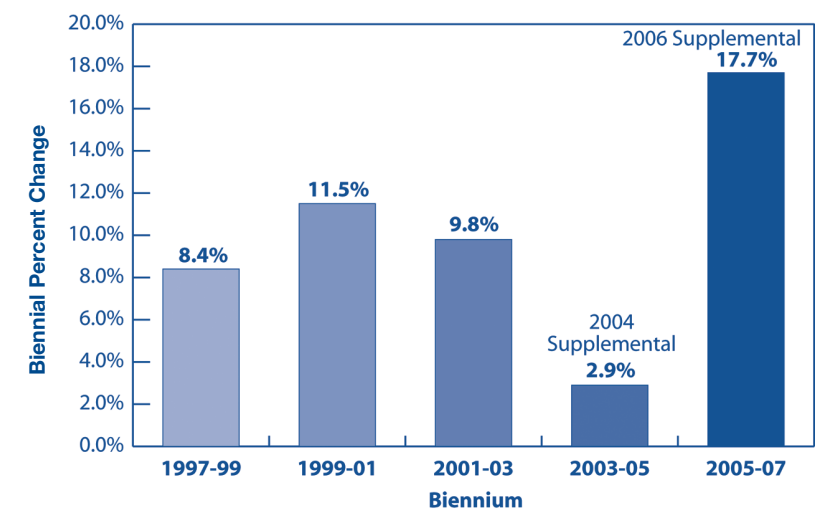
*Court rules Democrat budget and taxes violate voter-approved spending limit law*

Republicans have been extremely disappointed with the level of spending and irresponsible budgeting tactics in the state's two-year operating budget. The Democrat budget, with huge money shifts and the largest spending increase in history, sets taxpayers up for a half-billion dollar shortfall next biennium, despite coming into the session with a \$1.6 billion surplus.

Our concerns were validated by a Snohomish County Superior Court judge who ruled last month that the underlying 2005-07 budget violates the spending limit law approved by voters in 1993. The judge called the budget "illusory" and "artificial manipulation," saying it "exploited a loophole in I-601" to prevent citizens from voting on tax increases enacted last year.

Unfortunately, the governor has decided to appeal the court decision, engaging the taxpayers in a legal battle at your expense. We would rather lawmakers work in a bipartisan manner to bring the budget into compliance with the law, and more importantly, create a truly responsible budget that offers more transparency in how the taxpayers' money is spent.

## History of State Spending Near General Fund-State



Rep. Gary Alexander • Rep. Richard DeBolt

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